



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Canyon National Park

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Grand Canyon News Release

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National Park Service Seeks Public Input on a Bison Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for Grand Canyon National Park

Grand Canyon, AZ – The National Park Service (NPS) is pleased to announce the latest step to manage the impacts of bison on the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP). After meeting with cooperators Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)--over the last several months, the NPS will initiate public scoping later this week for a bison management plan and environmental impact statement (EIS) to be prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

A herd of bison was brought to the Grand Canyon region in the early 1900s and has been managed since 1950 by the AGFD in the House Rock Wildlife Area (HRWA) on the Kaibab National Forest through an interagency agreement with the USFS.

During the late 1990s, the bison began “pioneering” up to the top of the Kaibab Plateau and into GCNP. A combination of public hunt pressure, drought and fire, and reduced forage quality in House Rock Valley during the 1990s may have contributed to the bison moving through Saddle Mountain Wilderness and onto the higher elevations of the Kaibab Plateau. Over the past several years, very few bison have returned to HRWA and most now spend a majority of their time inside the park, with many not leaving GCNP.

Since 2008, a workgroup consisting of staff from GCNP, AGFD, and USFS has been addressing research needs related to impacts of the bison herd on GCNP resources, and potential management tools, as well as administrative and operational challenges of long-term cooperative management. Also in 2008, the Department of the Interior (DOI) chartered a Bison Conservation Initiative to improve bison management amongst its various bureaus, including the National Park Service. These efforts are ongoing and NPS is now initiating development of a long-term, coordinated approach to manage the current and future impacts of bison on natural and cultural resources of GCNP while supporting AGFD, USFS and BLM goals for management of a free-ranging bison population outside the park.

“Stakeholder input is a central and critical part of this planning process,” stated Grand Canyon National Park Superintendent Dave Uberuaga. “We look forward to engaging interested members of the public,

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other agencies, tribes, and organizations to get their ideas. We appreciate the on-going collaboration of the U.S. Forest Service, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and look forward to working with the Bureau of Land Management as we work through this process.”

The first opportunity for such involvement will be during a 60-day public scoping period beginning when the Notice of Intent is published in the Federal Register later this week. Scoping will provide the public and other interested parties the opportunity to participate early in identifying the range of issues to be considered when the NPS studies the potential environmental impacts of managing bison in the park; to identify topics and concerns that should be addressed in the EIS; and to bring forward any new information that NPS may not be aware of that would be useful in preparing the plan and EIS.

The NPS will host three in-person open house meetings during this comment period, as follows:

Monday, April 28, 2014
Kanab Middle School
690 S. Cowboy Way
Kanab, UT 84741
6:00-8:00 p.m.

Tuesday, April 29, 2014
High Country Conference Center
201 W. Butler Ave
Flagstaff, AZ 86001
6:00-8:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 30, 2014
Arizona Game and Fish Department
Activities Center
4044 W. Black Canyon Boulevard
Phoenix, AZ 85086
6:00-8:00 p.m.

The NPS also plans to hold two informational web-based meetings the week after the in-person open houses. In the coming weeks, please check the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca_bison_eis, as more information about the bison management plan and EIS, public scoping, and public meetings will be posted on this site as it becomes available.

Interested parties will be able to submit scoping comments either electronically on the PEPC web site (the preferred method of receiving comments); via U.S. Postal Service at Grand Canyon National Park, PO Box 129, Attn: Bison Management Plan EIS, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023; or at one of the in-person public meetings the NPS will be holding during the 60-day scoping period. Public comments will not be accepted during the web-based meetings; rather participants will be directed to the PEPC web site to enter their comments.

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